

*Office of the Select Board
Town of Orange, New Hampshire
Minutes of June 23, 2020*

Present: Dorothy Heinrichs, Chair; Tamara Fairbank, Aaron Allen, and Sandi Pierson (clerical).

Others: Jesse Stark, Donald McFarlane and Alasdair Dunlap-Smith.

Meeting opened on the front lawn at 6:30 p.m. Attendance taken by the secretary.

Minutes: The minutes of June 9, 2020 were unanimously approved as submitted.

Mascoma School Residency: The Board reviewed the school residency list for Orange. Dorothy signed a letter to the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent notifying her that a student listed as living in Orange had moved from the town in May of 2019.

Salvage license: The Board signed Warren Morrill's annual auto salvage yard license (Route 4).

Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund (CRF): The Board signed a letter to the Trustees of the Trust Fund and the treasurer authorizing the return of \$16,700 to the Revaluation CRF. In April the Board authorized the full payment be withdrawn for the town-wide revaluation. Due to the unanticipated COVID 19 pandemic, the contract with Avitar was revised to a two-year process, of which payment of \$16,700 will not be due until 2021.

State of NH Broadband Extension Program: On June 18 the Board received a request for proposals (RFP) from the State for the expansion of broadband internet in rural areas, especially in light of the circumstances created by the pandemic—remote student learning, individuals working remotely, telehealth conferencing, etc. Dorothy stated that unfortunately the notice of the RFP was issued on June 18th and the question period closed on the June 22, and proposals are due by July 2. She said this does not give the town to act.

Donald McFarlane and Alasdair Dunlap-Smith spoke on the RFP, and both agreed with Dorothy that there was no way that the town could benefit from the program given the short notice. Donald and Alasdair both summarized the present status of internet in the area, including internet access and the lack of, internet speeds, the authenticity of actual internet speeds vs. what is reported by companies, the cost and viability of a fiber network and utility pole rental, the inaccuracy of the providers' coverage maps, and the exorbitant cost of a private internet line.

Dorothy stated that about ten years ago she spearheaded an ad hoc committee on internet in Orange, but subsequently internet providers did not follow through with any plans to provide better and faster internet service. Both Donald and Alasdair said that they would be open to being part of a new ad hoc committee to explore better internet service in Orange. They invite any interested residents to join them and to contact them by email. People interested in participating may contact Donald at dsmcf@sc3d.org and/or Alasdair at citromelo@gmail.com.

Legal representation: Dorothy said she spoke with Select Board personnel in the neighboring town of Groton about their legal representation. (Since Gardner, Fulton, and Waugh was purchased by the extensive Drummond Woodsum law offices, the Board has not been wholly satisfied with the legal representation.) Dorothy said that Groton uses the four-person law firm Mitchell and Bates and they told her they have been very pleased with their legal services. Sandi stated that Dorchester also uses Mitchell and Bates. Because the attorney retainer contract with Drummond Woodsum is due for renewal on July 1, the Board concurred to postpone a decision to seek alternative legal representation until the 2020-2021 contract with Drummond Woodsum has ended.

Flood-damaged road repairs: Dorothy reported that the FEMA Reimbursement Anticipation Note has been finalized and road reconstruction may now begin. Razor Hill Excavation (Bobby Senter) expects to begin work on New Colony right after July 4th. The Board assumes Scott has signed the multiple contracts approved by the Board.

Property Assessment: Jesse Stark asked what the 2020 assessment on her New Colony Road property would be in consideration of the extreme damage to the property from the July 11 flood. She said a broker assessed the property as is for \$48,000. She asked that when the road culverts are replaced during road reconstruction, will they be larger and can the town make it so the water run-off course is to the brook.

Sandi said when the assessor visited Orange, she gave him Jesse's assessment card and told him the property value has changed due to the flood. The Board directed Sandi to contact Avitar and ask what the new assessment is and to forward that information to the Board and to Jesse. If it is considerably different from the broker's valuation, the Board will revisit the assessment. Regarding the culverts, Aaron said that Jesse should contact both Road Agent Scott Sanborn and Bobby Senter, the latter being the contractor who was awarded the contract for the reconstruction of the New Colony flood damage. Sandi will forward the contact information to Jessie. Aaron noted that the replacement culverts will be larger than the ones that are there now.

Other Select Board business:

- Dorothy reported there was a high-speed vehicle chase by the Canaan and Enfield police departments. For safety reasons, it was aborted when the chase came into Orange. There is a warrant out for the driver's arrest. The offender and vehicle is the same as the one that was reported to be pulling into people's driveways in Orange in the nighttime. A car that was earlier reported as abandoned at Mount Cardigan State Park is related to the same person.
- Dorothy will forward an email from Attorney Decker to the other Board members and the health officer regarding the town-owned property at 200 Tuttle Hill Road, which addresses the title situation of the abandoned cars and the town's financial responsibility to the former owner if they sell the property.

Secretary's report:

- The fire extinguishers in the Town House have had their annual inspection.
- Skip has taken care of the ant problem in the Town House.

- The 5.9-acre “owner unknown” lot on Tuttle Hill (with no road frontage) can be taken by tax deed in August. There are seven abutters to the property.
- Does the Board want a quote from Plodzik and Sanderson to complete this year’s MS-535 and audit? The Board agreed they should get a quote since the town does not have an appointed auditor.

Reports from Boards and Committees: n/a

Public comment: Jesse Stark expressed her appreciation for former Select Board member Bob Ells.

Bills and vouchers were reviewed and signed.

Meeting adjourned 7:15 p.m.

Dorothy Behlen Heinrichs

Tamara Fairbank

Aaron Allen